

**APPLICATION  
FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT**

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**TITLE:                   AN ELECTRONIC SYNTHESIZED STEELPAN DRUM**

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**SPECIFICATION**

15   **TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

BE IT KNOWN THAT I, Salmon Cupid, a citizen of Canada, have invented a new  
electronic steel pan drum as described in this specification:

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

### **Field of the Invention**

5 The present invention relates to an electronic version of a steelpan drum. The electronic synthesized steelpan drum has particular utility in connection with delivering the true and natural sounds and tones of a steelpan drum, as well as eliminating the need for continuous repetitive tuning of the instrument.

### **Description of the Prior Art**

10 Electronic steelpan drums that can deliver true and natural sounds of a variety of different steelpan instruments and that does not require the need for a tuning expert to continuously keep the instrument tuned for optimized sound is very desirable.

The use of electron drums is known in the prior art. For example, United States Patent Number 4,700,602 to Bozzio discloses an electronic drum having multiple sound sources with  
15 rapidly detachable striking elements and piezoelectric transducers. However, the Bozzio '602 patent is different in structure from the present invention and does not use electronic synthesizers to deliver the natural sound of a steelpan drum. Furthermore, this patent does not disclose the mixing of other musical instruments with the sound of the steelpan drum.

United States Patent Number 4,679,479 to Koyamoto discloses an electronic drum, which  
20 uses a single detection element mounted on the base layer of the drum to detect the striking of the drum surface. However, the Koyamoto '479 patent is different in structure from the present invention and does not use electronic synthesizers to deliver the natural sound of a steelpan drum. Furthermore, this patent does not disclose the mixing of other musical instruments with the sound of the steelpan drum.

25 Also, United States Patent Design Number D319,650 to Hart discloses the design of an electronic drum. However, the Hart '650 patent is also different in structure from the present invention in that it has a single striking surface and does not use electronic synthesizers to deliver the natural sound of a steelpan drum. Furthermore, this patent does not disclose the mixing of other musical instruments with the sound of the steelpan drum.

Lastly, United States Patent Numbers 5,502,274 to Hotz, 6,212,772 to Whitmyre et al., and 5,973,247 to Matthews disclose apparatus that may be of general interest and pertinent to the construction and design of the present invention. The Hotz '274 patent discloses an electronic musical instrument for playing along with prerecorded music. However, this instrument is different in structure from the present steelpan instrument patent and does not concentrate on generating the true and natural sound of steelpan drum. The Whitmyre '772 patent discloses a Caribbean steelpan drum. However, this instrument is also different in structure from the present invention and does not disclose an electronic version of the drum. Finally, the Matthews '247 patent discloses a portable steel drum and carrier. Here again, this instrument is different in structure from the present invention and does not disclose an electronic version of the drum.

While the above-described devices fulfill their respective, particular objectives and requirements, the aforementioned patents do not describe an electronic synthesized steelpan drum that delivers true and natural steelpan sound.

Therefore, a need exists for a new and improved electronic synthesized steelpan drum that can deliver the true and pure sounds of the steelpan drum, doesn't require the laborious setup and continuous tuning that the traditional steelpan drums require, and can be mixed with other musical instruments inside the instrument. In this regard, the present invention substantially fulfills this need. In this respect, the electronic synthesized steelpan drum according to the present invention substantially departs from the conventional concepts and designs of the prior art, and in doing so provides an apparatus primarily developed for the purpose of providing pure steelpan drum sounds from an electronic instrument.

### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

In view of the foregoing disadvantages inherent in the known types of synthesized drums now present in the prior art, the present invention provides an electronic synthesized steelpan drum, and overcomes the above-mentioned disadvantages and drawbacks of the prior art. As such, the general purpose of the present invention, which will be described subsequently in greater detail, is to provide a new and improved steelpan drum that has all the advantages of the prior art mentioned heretofore and many novel features that result in a steelpan that is not anticipated, rendered obvious, suggested, or even implied by the prior art, either alone or in any combination

thereof.

To attain this, the present invention essentially comprises an electronic synthesized version of the steelpan drum. The instrument will resemble a conventional steelpan drum, featuring the same circular or shallow cylindrical shape with a sunken concave playing surface.

5 The steelpan can be made thinner in height since the sound is generated electronically, thereby making the instrument lighter and easier to handle, although some designs may maintain the conventional height for aesthetics purposes.

The electronic steelpan drum will include a central processor chip and associated memory chips for providing a variety of synthesized steelpan sounds or tones, including tenor, double-  
10 seconds, guitar, cello, quadraphonic, tenor-bass, and bass steel drums. Musical instrument digital interface (MIDI) ports are also included on the unit to allow it to interface with other electronic or digital instruments and sound modules. It is also likely that an output jack would be included for connecting the steelpan to an external audio amplifier.

The concave playing surface of the steelpan will have a series of rubber pad striking  
15 areas, which can be arranged in a conventional or other unique pattern. One example, typical of a tenor-pan steel drum will have an outer ring of twelve larger pads around the perimeter of the playing surface, an intermediate ring of twelve additional medium-sized pads, and four small pads located at the center of the playing surface. Generally, the larger area pads are associated with lower frequency musical notes and the smaller pads with higher frequency notes. Attached  
20 under each pad is a pressure sensor, which will detect the amount of force applied when a pannist strikes a pad and provide a signal to the central processor for controlling the synthesized sound.

The circular shape of the steelpan will typically be extended elliptically in one direction to provide surface space for various control functions on the instrument. These functions include speakers, volume control, function selection buttons, and a control display panel. Optionally, a  
25 compact disk (CD) port can be added to the unit for loading additional digitized sounds of rhythms and samples for playing and recording music from the instrument.

In use, the pannist will select the desired synthesized sound effect using the control buttons and display panel, choosing one from the available sound variety list. He/she can also configure the pads to represent a desired pattern. Typically, steelpans require setup and more or  
30 less continuous tuning by an expert in order to generate the pure and unique sounds that are

possible from this instrument. However, the electronic synthesized steelpan of the present invention requires much less setup and tuning time, thereby allowing the player to concentrate his/her attention to the music.

The electronic synthesized steelpan of the present invention will electronically capture the unique and distinct “ping and ring” sound that comes from traditional steelpan instruments. This is achieved through advanced digital recording and storage within the built-in electronic chips, which allows the pannist to play music with full and easy control over the basic elements of tone, rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color, and equalized volume. This can be carried out with the pannist playing the instrument in the traditional way that steelpans are played the world over.

There has thus been outlined, rather broadly, the more important features of the invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated.

There are, of course, additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and which will form the subject matter of the claims attached.

Numerous objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art upon a reading of the following detailed description of presently preferred, but nonetheless illustrative, embodiments of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. In this respect, before explaining the current embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of descriptions and should not be regarded as limiting.

As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

It is therefore an object of the present invention is to provide a new electronic synthesized

steelpan drum that provides in the apparatuses and methods of the prior art some of the advantages thereof, while simultaneously overcoming some of the disadvantages normally associated therewith.

5 It is another object of the present invention to provide a new and improved electronic synthesized steelpan drum that may be easily and efficiently manufactured and marketed.

An even further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved electronic synthesized steelpan drum that has a low cost of manufacture with regard to both materials and labor, and which accordingly is then susceptible of low prices of sale to the consuming public, thereby making such instruments economically available to the buying public.

10 These together with other objects of the invention, along with the various features of novelty that characterize the invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure. For a better understanding of the invention, its operating advantages and the specific objects attained by its uses, reference should be had to the accompanying drawings and descriptive matter in which there is illustrated preferred  
15 embodiments of the invention.

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

The invention will be better understood and objects other than those set forth above will become apparent when consideration is given to the following detailed description thereof. Such  
20 description makes reference to the annexed drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a perspective top view of the preferred embodiment of the steelpan drum and accompanying free-standing pan stand constructed in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

Figure 2 is a perspective side view of the steelpan drum of the present invention.

25 Figure 3 is a block diagram for the electronics used in the synthesizing the steelpan drum of the present invention.

The same reference numerals refer to the same parts throughout the various figures.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

Referring now to the drawings, and particularly to Figures 1-3, a preferred embodiment of the electronic synthesized steelpan drum of the present invention is shown and generally designated by the reference numeral 10.

5 In Figures 1 and 2, a new electronic synthesized steelpan drum 10 of the present invention for producing true and pure steelpan tones is illustrated and will be described. More particularly, the electronic synthesized steelpan drum 10 is comprised of an outer housing 12 with a convex back surface 36 that has a stretched-cylindrical (oval) shaped top playing surface with a shallow vertical wall (skirt). In this example, which is typical of a tenor steelpan, the top surface of the  
10 steelpan has a circular concave playing surface 14 towards one side with raised control functions located on the other side of oval shaped top surface. Approximately twelve striking pads 16 are arranged in a ring near the outer perimeter of the playing surface. When the surface of one of these striking pads 16 is struck with a panstick, typically a lower frequency tone is produced. Additionally, there are typically twelve medium-sized rubber striking pads 18 arranged in a ring  
15 inside the outer ring, used to produce mid-frequency tones. Finally, four or more small rubber striking pads 20 are arranged in the center portion of the playing surface for producing higher-frequency tones. A pressure sensor is attached under each pad with the sensor outputs being connected to inputs of a central processor chip mounted on a circuit board inside the outer housing 12. Associated memory chips for storing a variety of synthesized steelpan sounds or  
20 tones, including tenor, double-seconds, guitar, cello, quadraphonic, tenor-bass, bass steel drums, and a full range of musical orchestral and symphonic sounds are included on the circuit board and coupled to the central processor chip. When one of the pads is struck, an appropriate synthesized sound is produced and amplified through one or more speakers 22 included on the top surface of the instrument. The overall volume of the sound is controlled with equalized  
25 volume control buttons 24, also mounted in the control function area of the instrument, with the volume of each tone being further controlled by the amount of force applied to the pad and picked up by the pressure sensor. A control display monitor 26 and function selection buttons 32 are used to select different steelpan types and to configure the pads according to the layout of different steel pan instruments. Also, a compact disk (CD) burner/player input port/slot 30 can  
30 be added to the unit for loading additional digitized sounds, such as samples of different rhythms,

and playing and recording music from the instrument for mixing with the steelpan sound.

Optionally, musical instrument digital interface (MIDI) ports are included on the unit to allow it to interface with other electronic or digital instruments and sound modules, as well. An output jack 38 is also be included for connecting the steelpan to an external audio amplifier for outdoor and/or large theater-type venues. The instrument has an electrical power cord 28 that plugs into a 110-volt AC receptacle for electrical power. Finally, a free-standing pan stand 34 will accompany the steelpan drum for both functional and aesthetic purposes. The steelpan drum outer housing 12 will have a mounting means 35 attached to the sides, which will slide into slots 37 at the top of the free-standing pan stand 34, thereby allowing the electronic synthesized steelpan to be hung on a pan stand in a conventional manner.

Figure 3 is a block diagram 40 for the electronics used in synthesizing the steelpan drum of the present invention. The circuitry is contained on a circuit board that is mounted inside the instrument. At the center of this circuitry is the central processor 400 with its associated memory 402, which stores the digital data for the synthesized sounds. Also, the pressure sensors 404 that are associated with the pads are coupled to inputs of the central processing chip. The output of the circuit is provided through audio drivers 406 and volume control circuitry 408 to one or more speakers 410 mounted on the outer surface of the synthesized steelpan drum 10. A CD burner/player 412 capability is provided for inputting other digital sounds for mixing with the steelpan sound and for recording music from the instrument. Finally, a power supply 414 is included to supply a low voltage DC voltage to the circuit board from a 110-volt AC source.

It can now be understood that the electronic synthesized steelpan of the present invention will electronically capture the unique and distinct “ping and ring” sound that comes from traditional steelpan instruments. This is achieved through advanced digital recording and storage within the built-in electronic chips, which allows the pannist to play music with full and easy control over the basic elements of tone, rhythm, melody, harmony, tone color, and equalized volume. This can be carried out with the pannist playing the instrument in the traditional way that steelpans are played the world over. And since the electronic synthesized steelpan of the present invention requires much less setup and tuning time, the pannist can spend most of his/her time concentrating on the music.

While a preferred embodiment of the electronic synthesized steelpan drum has been



described in detail, it should be apparent that modifications and variations thereto are possible, all of which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. With respect to the above description then, it is to be realized that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention. For example, any number of other desired sounds can be synthesized and added to the memory chips for providing other unique steelpan sounds. Also, the housing of the steelpan drum may be made of lightweight metal, wood, or other similar material.

Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.